

FREE HOMES FOR FREE MEN.

SPEECH

OF

HON. G. A. GROW, OF PENNSYLVANIA.

Delivered in the House of Representatives, February 29, 1860.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union—

Mr. GROW said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: At the close of the Revolution, the colonies claimed dominion, based upon their respective colonial grants from the Crown of Great Britain, over an uninhabited wilderness of two hundred and twenty million acres of land, extending to the Mississippi on the west, and the Canadas on the north. The disposition of these lands became a subject of controversy between the colonies even before the Confederation, and was an early obstacle to the organization of any Government for the protection of their common interests.

The colonies whose charter from the Crown extended over none of the unoccupied lands claimed, in the language of the instructions of Maryland in 1772, to her delegates in Congress:

"That a country unsettled at the commencement of this war, claimed by the British Crown, and ceded to it by the treaty at Paris, if wrested from the common enemy by the blood and treasure of the thirteen States, should be considered as a common property, subject to be parcelled out by Congress into free, convenient, and independent Governments, in such manner and at such times as the wisdom of that assembly shall hereafter direct."

The propriety and the justice of ceding these lands to the Confederation, to be thus parcelled out into free and independent States, having become the topic of discussion everywhere in the colonies, Congress, in order to allay the controversy, and remove the only remaining obstacle to a final ratification of the Articles of Confederation, declared, by resolution, on the 10th of October, 1780:

"That the unappropriated lands which may be ceded or relinquished to the United States by any particular State" * * * "shall be disposed of for the common benefit of the

United States, and be settled and formed into distinct republican States, which shall become members of the Federal Union, and have the same rights of sovereignty, freedom, and independence, as the other States, &c. *That the said lands shall be granted or settled at such times, and under such regulations, as shall hereafter be agreed on by the United States in Congress assembled, or nine or more of them.*"

In pursuance of the provisions of this resolution, New York, Virginia, Massachusetts, Connecticut, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia, ceded their claims, including title and jurisdiction, to the waste lands, as they were called, outside of their respective State limits; all of them, except Georgia and North Carolina, without any conditions annexed to their respective grants, save those contained in the resolution of Congress just referred to. The reservation in the grants of Georgia and North Carolina were not, however, as to the future disposition of the lands, but a condition that slavery should not be prohibited therein by Congress. The territory thus conditionally granted is contained within the States of Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama. With the exception of the grants of North Carolina and Georgia, (and the reservations even in those relating only to the form of their future government,) the public lands claimed by the colonies at the close of the Revolution were ceded to the General Government, to be settled and disposed of "*under such regulations as shall hereafter be agreed on by the United States in Congress assembled.*"

Since that time the Government has acquired by treaty, of France, the Louisiana purchase; of Spain, the Floridas; of Mexico, Utah, New Mexico, and California; containing, altogether, over twelve hundred millions (1,200,000,000) acres of land. So the General Government, by cessions from the original States, and purchases from other nations, has acquired, exclusive of

water, as computed by the Commissioner of the Land Office, fourteen hundred and fifty million (1,450,000,000) acres of public lands; of which there have been sold, to September 30, 1859, one hundred and forty-seven million eight hundred and twenty thousand two hundred and seventy-four (17,088,274) acres; and otherwise disposed of by grants and donations to individuals, corporations, companies, and States, including grants since 30th June, 1857, two hundred and forty-one million seven hundred and seventy thousand and fifty-two (211,770,052) acres; leaving of public lands belonging to the Government undisposed of on the 30th September, 1859, one thousand and sixty-one million one hundred and forty-one thousand six hundred and seventy-five (1,061,141,675) acres.

What disposition shall be made of this vast inheritance is a question of no small magnitude. Three times, within seven years, a homestead bill has passed this House, and been defeated each time by the Democratic majority in the Senate. On the vote on the homestead bill in the House, last Congress, out of one hundred and thirty Democrats, but thirty-one voted for it; and in the Senate, on the test vote between taking up the homestead bill, after it had passed the House, and only required the vote of the Senate to make it a law, so far as Congress was concerned, or to take up the bill for the purchase of Cuba, but one Democrat voted for the homestead, and only eight at any time; while every Republican in the Senate, and every one in the House, with a single exception, was for the homestead. Of all the Representatives of the slave States, but three in the House voted for it; and but two, at any time, in the Senate. So the Democratic party, as a party, arrayed itself in opposition to this beneficent policy. The Republican party, on the other hand, is committed to this measure by its votes in Congress, by its resolves in State conventions, and by its devotion to the great central idea of its existence—the rights and interests of free labor.

Early in this session I introduced a bill, which now awaits the action of the House, providing that any person who is twenty-one years, or more old, or who is the head of a family, may enter one hundred and sixty acres of any land subject to pre-emption, or upon which he may have a pre-emption claim; and, by cultivating the same for five years, shall be entitled to a patent from the Government, on the payment of the usual fees of the land office, and ten dollars to cover the cost of surveying and managing.

The land policy, as now conducted, permits the President, in his discretion, to expose to public sale, by proclamation, any or all of the public lands, after the same are surveyed. Every person settled on the lands so advertised for sale, must, before the day fixed in the proclamation of the President, pay for his lands, and they are liable to be sold to any bidder who

offers one dollar and twenty-five cents, or more, per acre. During the days of sale fixed by the President, any one can purchase, at one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre, as many acres of land, not before perempted, as he desires, selecting his own location. The lands that remain unsold at the expiration of the days of sale fixed by the President are subject to private entry; that is, any person can enter at the land office any or all of the lands, that are at that time unsold, at one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre, if the same have not been offered for sale more than ten years; if for a longer period, then at a less price, according to the length of time they may have been in the market. Thus, under the existing policy, there is no restraint on land monopoly. The Rothschilds, the Barings, or any other of the world's millionaires, may become the owners of untold acres of our public domain, to be resold to the settler at exorbitant prices, or to be held as an investment for future speculation.

Congress, as the trustee of the whole people, is vested, by the condition of the grants from the States and by the Constitution itself, with the sole discretionary power of disposing of these lands. But, in the exercise of a sound discretion, it becomes its duty to dispose of them in the way that will best promote the greatness and glory of the Republic. And how can that be accomplished so well as by a policy that will secure them in limited quantities to the actual cultivator, at the least possible cost, and thus prevent the evils of a system of land monopoly—one of the direst, deadliest curses that ever paralyzed the energies of a nation or palsied the arm of industry? It needs no lengthy dissertation to portray its evils. Its history in the Old World is written in sighs and tears. Under its influence, you behold there the proudest and most splendid aristocracies side by side with the most abject and debased people; vast manors hemmed in by hedges, as a sporting ground for the nobility, while men are dying beside the enclosure for the want of land to till. Under its blighting influence, you behold industry in rags, and patience in despair. Such are some of the fruits of land monopoly in the Old World; and shall we permit its seeds to vegetate in the virgin soil of the New? Our present system is subject to like evils, not so great in magnitude perhaps, but similar in kind.

Of the three hundred and eighty-eight million eight hundred and fifty-eight thousand three hundred and twenty-five (388,858,325) acres of land disposed of by the Government, to September 31, 1859, one hundred and forty seven million eighty-eight thousand two hundred and seventy-three (147,088,273) acres were sold for cash, and two hundred and forty-one million seven hundred and seventy thousand and fifty-two (211,770,052) acres were donated in grants to individuals, corporations, and States.

The Government had received from the sales

of the public lands, as appears from the report of the Commissioner of the Land Office, to June 30, 1853, one hundred and forty-two million two hundred and eighty-three thousand four hundred and seventy-eight dollars, (\$142,283,478.) to which add thirty-eight million three hundred and thirty-six thousand one hundred and sixty dollars and ninety cents, (\$38,336,160.90.) received since that time, would make the gross amount received from the lands to September 30, 1859, one hundred and eighty million six hundred and nineteen thousand six hundred and thirty-eight dollars and ninety cents; (\$180,619,638.90.) while the entire cost, including purchase money, extinguishing of Indian title, surveying, and managing, has been, for the same period, ninety-one million nine hundred and ninety-four thousand and thirteen dollars, (\$91,994,013.) leaving a net revenue to the Government, over and above all cost, of eighty-eight million six hundred and twenty-five thousand six hundred and twenty-five dollars and ninety cents; (\$88,625,625.90.) with one hundred and thirty-six million nine hundred and seventy thousand nine hundred and forty-one (136,970,941) acres surveyed but unsold, of which eighty million (80,000,000) acres are subject to private entry.

Of the one hundred and forty-seven million eighty-eight thousand two hundred and seventy-three (147,088,273) acres sold by the Government, not more than one-half of it, probably, was bought at Government rates by the actual cultivator; the other half, I assume, cost the cultivator, on an average, at least four dollars per acre over the Government price. So he would pay, on seventy-three million five hundred and forty-four thousand one hundred and thirty-six (73,544,136) acres, being one-half the quantity sold by the Government, two hundred and ninety-four million one hundred and seventy-six thousand five hundred and forty-four dollars, (\$294,176,544.) On the two hundred and forty-one million seven hundred and seventy thousand and fifty-two (241,770,052) acres donated to individuals, companies, and States, including over seventy million acres for school purposes, and over fifty million acres for railroads and internal improvements, I assume that the cultivator must pay on an average for these lands at least five dollars per acre, making the sum of twelve hundred and eight million eight hundred and fifty thousand two hundred and sixty dollars, (\$1,208,850,260.) The actual cultivator, then, will have to pay to the Government and to the speculator for these lands, if the foregoing estimate of prices be correct, at least sixteen hundred and eighty-three million six hundred and forty-six thousand four hundred and forty-two dollars and ninety cents, (\$1,683,646,442.90.) of which eighty-eight million six hundred and twenty-five thousand six hundred and twenty-five dollars and ninety cents (\$88,625,625.90) has been paid, in net revenue, into the Treasury of the

United States, the balance to be absorbed by the speculator.

The Government, by its existing land policy, has thus caused to be abstracted from the earnings of its hardy pioneers almost seventeen hundred million dollars for the mere privilege of enjoying one of God's bounties to man. This large amount has been abstracted from the sons of toil without rendering any equivalent, save a permit from the State to occupy a wilderness, to which not a day or hour of man's labor had been applied to change it from the condition in which the God of nature made it. Why should Governments seize upon any of the bounties of God to man, and make them a source of revenue? While the earth was created for the whole human family, and was made its abiding place through the pilgrimage of this life, and since the hour of the primal curse, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," man has been forced to the cultivation of the soil to obtain subsistence for himself and the means of promoting the welfare of the race, why should Governments wrest from him the right to apply his labor to such unoccupied portion of the earth's surface as may be necessary for his support until he has contributed to the revenues of the State, any more than to permit him to breathe the air, enjoy the sunlight, or quaff from the rills and rivers of the earth? It would be just as rightful, were it possible to be done, to survey the atmosphere off into quarter sections, and transfer it by parchment titles; divide the sun into quantum of rays, and dole it out to grooping mortals at a price; or arch over the waters of the earth into vast reservoirs, and sell it to dying men.

In the language of remarks heretofore made on this subject, why has this claim of man to monopolize any of the gifts of God to man been confined, by legal codes, to the soil alone? Is there any other reason than that it is a right which, having its origin in feudal times—under a system that regarded man but as an appendage of the soil that he tilled, and whose life, liberty, and happiness, were but means of increasing the pleasures, pampering the passions and appetites of his liege lord—and, having once found a place in the books, it has been retained by the reverence which man is wont to pay to the past, and to time-honored precedents? The human mind is so constituted that it is prone to regard as right what has come down to us approved by long usage, and hallowed by gray age. It is a claim that had its origin with the kindred idea that royal blood flows only in the veins of an exclusive few, whose souls are more ethereal, because born amid the glitter of courts, and cradled amid the pomp of lords and courtiers, and, therefore, they are to be installed as rulers and lawgivers of the race. Most of the evils that afflict society have had their origin in violence and wrong enacted into law by the experience of the past, and retained by the prejudices of the present.

Is it not time you swept from your statute book its still lingering relics of feudalism? blotted out the principles engrafted upon it by the narrow-minded policy of other times, and adapted the legislation of the country to the spirit of the age, and to the true ideas of man's rights and relations to his Government?

For if a man has a right on earth, he has a right to land enough to rear a habitation on. If he has a right to live, he has a right to the free use of whatever nature has provided for his sustenance—air to breathe, water to drink, and land enough to cultivate for his subsistence; for these are the necessary and indispensable means for the enjoyment of his inalienable rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." And is it for a Government that claims to dispense equal and exact justice to all classes of men, and that has laid down correct principles in its great chart of human rights, to violate those principles and its solemn declarations in its legislative enactments?

The struggle between capital and labor is an unequal one at best. It is a struggle between the bones and sinews of men and dollars and cents. And in that struggle, is it for the Government to stretch forth its arm to aid the strong against the weak? Shall it continue, by its legislation, to elevate and enrich idleness on the wail and the woe of industry?

For if the rule be correct as applied to Governments as well as individuals, that whatever a person permits another to do, having the right and means to prevent it, he does himself, then indeed is the Government responsible for all the evils that may result from speculation and land monopoly in your public domain. For it is not denied that Congress has the power to make any regulations for the disposal of these lands, not injurious to the general welfare. Now, when a new tract is surveyed, and you open your land office and expose it to sale, the man with the most money is the largest purchaser. The most desirable and available locations are seized upon by the capitalists of the country, who seek that kind of investment. Your settler who chances not to have a pre-emption right, or to be there at the time of sale, when he comes to seek a home for himself and his family, must pay the speculator three or four hundred per cent. on his investment, or encounter the trials and hardships of a still more remote border life. And thus, under the operation of laws that you call equal and just, you take from the settler three or four dollars per acre, and put it in the pocket of the speculator—thus, by the operation of your law, abstracting so much of his hard earnings for the benefit of capital; for not an hour's labor has been applied to the land since it was sold by the Government, nor is it more valuable to the settler. Has not the laborer a right to complain of legislation that compels him to endure greater toils and hardships, or contribute a portion of his earnings for the benefit of the capitalist?

But not upon the capitalist or the speculator is it proper that the blame should fall. Man must seek a livelihood and do business under the laws of the country; and whatever rights he may acquire under the laws, though they may be wrong, yet the well-being of society requires that they be respected and faithfully observed. If a person engage in a business legalized and regulated by the laws, and uses no fraud or deception in its pursuit, and evils result to the community, let them apply the remedy to the proper source—that is, to the law-making power. The laws and the law-makers are responsible for whatever evils necessarily grow out of their enactments. What justice can there be in the legislation of a country by which the earnings of its labor are abstracted for any purpose without returning an equivalent?

In order to secure to labor its earnings, so far as is possible, by legislative action, and to strengthen the elements of national greatness and power, why should not the legislation of the country be so changed as to prevent for the future the evils of land monopoly, by setting apart the vast and unoccupied Territories of the Union, and consecrating them forever in free homes for free men?

Mr. MAYNARD. May I be allowed to ask my friend from Pennsylvania a question?

Mr. GROW. Certainly.

Mr. MAYNARD. It is this: whether he is in favor, or otherwise, of allowing the old soldier or his assignee to locate his land warrant on the public domain—

Mr. GROW. I always answer questions that are pertinent to the point under discussion, not otherwise. I am not arguing any question about land warrants, but about the proper disposition to be made of the public lands. I do not see the applicability of the gentleman's question, and must therefore pass it by, as I do not wish to be diverted from my argument.

Mr. MAYNARD. The gentleman is mistaken about the object of my question.

Mr. GROW. I would provide in our land policy for securing homesteads to actual settlers, and whatever bounties the Government should grant to the old soldiers I would have made in money, and not in land warrants, which are bought in most cases by the speculator, as an easier and cheaper mode of acquiring the public lands. So they only facilitate land monopoly. The men who go forth at the call of their country, to uphold its standard and vindicate its honor, are deserving, it is true, of a more substantial reward than tears to the dead and thanks to the living; but there are soldiers of peace as well as of war, and though no waving plume beckons them on to glory or to death, their dying scene is oft a crimson one. They fall leading the van of civilization along untrodden paths, and are buried in the dust of its advancing columns. No monument marks the scene of deadly strife; no stone their resting

place; the winds sighing through the branches of the forest alone sing their requiem. Yet they are the meritorious men of the Republic—the men who give it strength in war, and glory in peace. The achievements of your pioneer army, from the day they first drove back the Indian tribes from the Atlantic seaboard to the present hour, have been the achievements of science and civilization over the elements, the wilderness, and the savage.

If rewards or bounties are to be granted for true heroism in the progress of the race, none is more deserving than the pioneer who expels the savage and the wild beast, and opens in the wilderness a home for science and a pathway for civilization.

"Peace hath her victories
No less renowned than war."

The paths of glory no longer lead over smoking towns and crimsoned fields, but along the lanes and by-ways of human misery and woe, where the bones and sinews of men are struggling with the elements, with the unrelenting obstacles of nature, and the not less unmerciful obstacles of a false civilization. The noblest achievement in this world's pilgrimage is to raise the fallen from their degradation, soothe the broken-hearted, dry the tears of woe, and alleviate the sufferings of the unfortunate in their pathway to the tomb.

"Go say to the raging sea, he still;
Bid the wild, lawless winds obey thy will;
French to the storm, and reason with despair;
But tell not misery's son that life is fair."

If you would lead the erring back from the paths of vice and crime to virtue and to honor, give him a home—give him a hearthstone, and he will surround it with household gods. If you would make men wiser and better, relieve your almshouses, close the doors of your penitentiaries, and break in pieces your gallows, purify the influences of the domestic fireside, for that is the school in which human character is formed, and there its destiny is shaped; there the soul receives its first impress, and man his first lesson, and they go with him for weal or for woe through life. For purifying the sentiments, elevating the thoughts, and developing the noblest impulses of man's nature, the influences of a rural fireside and an agricultural life are the noblest and the best. In the obscurity of the cottage, far removed from the seductive influences of rank and affluence, are nourished the virtues that counteract the decay of human institutions, the courage that defends the national independence, and the industry that supports all classes of the State.

It was said by Lord Chatham, in his appeal to the House of Commons, in 1775, to withdraw the British troops from Boston, that "trade, indeed, increases the glory and wealth of a country; but its true strength and stamina are to be looked for in the cultivators of the land. In the simplicity of their lives is found the simpleness of virtue, the integrity and

'courage of freedom. These true, genuine sons of the soil are invincible.'

The history of American prowess has recorded these words as prophetic. Man, in defence of his hearthstone and fireside, is invincible against a world of mercenaries.

Let us adopt the policy cherished by Jackson, and indicated in his annual message to Congress in 1832, in which he says:

"It cannot be doubted that the speedy settlement of these lands constitutes the true interest of the Republic. The wealth and strength of a country are its population, and the best part of the population are the cultivators of the soil. Independent farmers are everywhere the bases of society, and true friends of liberty." * * * "To put an end forever to all partial and interested legislation on this subject, and to afford to every American citizen of enterprise the opportunity of securing an independent freehold, it seems to me, therefore, best to abandon the idea of raising a future revenue out of the public lands."

This advice by one of the country's noblest patriots, though unheeded at the time, is among the richest legacies he has bequeathed to his country.

Why should the Government hold the public domain longer as a source of revenue, when it has already more than paid all costs and expenses incurred in its acquisition and management? Even if the Government had a right, based in the nature of things, thus to hold these lands, it would be adverse to a sound national policy to do so; for the real wealth of a country consists not in the sums of money paid into its treasury, but in its flocks, herds, and cultivated fields. Nor does its real strength consist in fleets and armies, but in the bones and sinews of an independent yeomanry and the comfort of its laboring classes. Its real glory consists not in the splendid palace, lofty spire, or towering dome; but in the intelligence, comfort, and happiness of the fireside of its citizens.

"What constitutes a State?

Not high-raised battlement or labored mound,
Thick wall or mounted gate;
Not cities proud, with spires and turrets crowned;
Not bays and broad-armed ports,
Where, laughing at the storm, rich navies ride;
Not starred and spangled courts,
Where low-browed baseness wads perfume to pride.
No; men, high-minded men—

* * * * *

Men, who their duties know,
But know their rights, and knowing, dare maintain;
Prevent the long-armed blow,
And crush the tyrant while they rend the chain:
These constitute a State."

The prosperity of States depends not on the mass of wealth, but its distribution. That country is greatest and most glorious in which there is the greatest number of happy firesides. And if you would make the fireside happy, raise the fallen from their degradation, elevate the servile from their grovelling pursuits to the

rights and dignity of men, you must first place within their reach the means for supplying their pressing physical wants, so that religion can exert its influence on the soul and soothe the weary pilgrim in his pathway to the tomb.

But as a question of revenue merely, it would be to the advantage of the Government to grant these lands in homesteads to actual cultivators, if thereby it was to induce the settlement of the wilderness, instead of selling them to the speculator without settlement. The revenue to the Government from the lands, if considered annual, is the interest on the purchase money; which would be on a quarter section, at one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre, the interest on two hundred dollars, equal, at six per cent., to twelve dollars per year.

But as the revenue of the General Government (with the exception of the sales of the lands) is derived almost wholly from duties on imported articles consumed in the country, the amount collected depends upon the quantity consumed. On an average, each individual consumes of imported articles about eleven dollars worth per year; and calling seven the average number of a family, then each family consume annually seventy-five dollars worth of imported articles; upon which a duty of not less than twenty dollars was paid.

So the Government would be the gainer of eight dollars per year on each quarter section, by giving it away to a settler in preference to selling it without settlement. In addition, as you cheapen the necessities and comforts of life, or increase men's means to pay for them, you increase their consumption; and in the same proportion as you increase the means to pay for imports, you increase the consumption of home products and manufactures; so that the settlement of the wilderness by a thriving population is as much the interest of the old States as of the new. The amount now received by the Government of the settler for the land, would enable him to furnish himself with the necessary stock and implements to commence its cultivation.

For the purposes of education, building railroads, opening all the avenues of trade, and of subduing the wilderness, the best disposition to be made of these lands is to grant them in limited quantities to the settler, and thus secure him in his earnings, by which he would have the means to surround himself with comfort and make his fireside happy; to erect the school-house, the church, and all the other ornaments of a higher civilization, and rear his children educated and respected members of society. This policy will not only add to the revenues of the General Government and the taxable property of the new States, but will increase the productive industry and commerce of the whole country, while strengthening all the elements of national greatness.

The first step in the decline of empires is the neglect of their agricultural interest, and with

its decay crumbles national power. It is the great fact stamped on all the ruins that strew the pathway of civilization. When the world's unwritten history shall be correctly deciphered, the record of the rise, progress, and fall of empires will be but the history of the rise, development, and decline of agriculture. Hooke, in describing the condition of agriculture among the Romans more than two thousand years ago, the process of absorption of the lands by the rich, and their consequent cultivation by slaves, furnishes the student of history with the secret causes that undermined the empire and destroyed its liberties. I read from book six, chapter seven, of his *History of Rome*, volume two, page 522:

"From the earliest times of *Rome*, it had been the custom of the *Romans*, when they subdued any of the nations in *Italy*, to deprive them of a part of their territory. A portion of these lands was sold, and the rest given to the poorer citizens; on condition, says *Appian*, of their paying annually a sixth of the corn and a fifth of the fruit of vines, besides a certain number of great and small cattle. In process of time, the rich, by various means, got possession of the lands destined for the subsistence of the poor." * * * "The rich and the mighty contrived to possess themselves of the lands of their poor neighbors. At first they held these acquisitions under borrowed names; afterwards openly in their own. To cultivate the farms, they employed foreign slaves; so that *Italy* was in danger of losing its inhabitants of free condition, (who had no encouragement to marry, no means to educate children,) and of being overrun with slaves and barbarians, that had neither affection for the Republic nor interest in her preservation.

"*Tiberius Gracchus*, now a Tribune of the people, undertook to remedy these disorders." * * *

"Never, says *Plutarch*, was proposed a law more mild and gentle against iniquity and oppression; yet the rich made a mighty clamor about the hardship of being stripped of their houses, their lands, their inheritances, the burial-places of their ancestors." * * * "The poor, on the other hand, complained of the extreme indigence to which they were reduced, and of their inability to bring up children. They enumerated the many battles where they had fought in defence of the Republic; notwithstanding which, they were allowed no share of the public lands; nay, the usurpers, to cultivate them, choose rather to employ foreigners and slaves than citizens of *Rome*." *Gracchus's* view was not to make poor men rich, but to strengthen the Republic by an increase of useful members, upon which he thought the safety and welfare of *Italy* depended. The insurrection and war of the slaves in *Sicily*, who were not yet quelled, furnished him with sufficient argument for expatiating on the danger of filling *Italy* with slaves." * *

"He asked the rich whether they preferred a slave to a citizen; a man unqualified to serve in war to a soldier; an alien to a member of the Republic; and which they thought would be more zealous for its interest? Then, as to the misery of the poor: 'The wild beasts of Italy have caves and dens to shelter them; but the people, who expose their lives for the defence of Italy, are allowed nothing but the light and air: they wander up and down with their wives and children, without house and without habitation. Our generals mock the soldiers, when, in battle, they exhort them to fight for their sepulchres and their household gods; for, amongst all that great number of Romans, there is not one who has either a domestic altar or a sepulchre of his ancestors. They fight and die, solely to maintain the riches and luxury of others; and are styled the lords of the universe, while they have not a single foot of ground in their possession.'"

Smith, in the second volume, page 291, of his Greek and Roman Biographical Dictionary, speaking of Tiberius Gracchus, and the reasons for his proposed legislation, says:

"His brother Caius related, in some of his works, that Tiberius, on his march to Spain, in (B. C.) 137, as he was passing through Etruria, observed with grief and indignation the deserted state of that fertile country; thousands of foreign slaves in chains were employed in cultivating the land and tending the flocks upon the immense estates of the wealthy, while the poorer classes of Roman citizens, who were thus thrown out of employment, had scarcely their daily bread, or a clod of earth to call their own. He is said to have been roused through that circumstance to exert himself in endeavoring to remedy this evil."

Had the policy advocated by Gracchus, of distributing the public lands among the landless citizens of the nation, been adopted, the Roman fields would have been cultivated by free men instead of slaves, and there would have been a race of men to stay the ravages of the barbarian. The Eternal City would not then have fallen an easy prey to the Goth and Vandal; but the star of her empire might have waved in triumph long after the ivy twined her broken columns.

With homes and firesides to defend, the arms and hearts of an independent yeomanry are a surer and more impregnable defence than battlement, wall, or tower. While the population of a country are the proprietors of the land which they till, they have an interest to surround their firesides with comfort, and make their homes happy—the great incentive to industry, frugality, and sobriety. It is such habits alone that give security to a Government, and form the real elements of national greatness and power.

National disasters are not the growth of a day, but the fruit of long years of injustice and

wrong. The seeds planted by false, pernicious legislation, often require ages to germinate and ripen into their harvests of ruin and death. The most pernicious of all the baleful seeds of national existence, is a policy that degrades its labor. Whenever agricultural labor becomes dishonorable, it will, of course, be confined to those who have no interest in the soil they till; and when the laborer ceases to have any interest in the land he cultivates, he ceases to have a stake in the advancement and good order of society, for he has nothing to lose, nothing to defend, nothing to hope for. The associations of an independent freehold are eminently calculated to ennoble and elevate the possessor. It is the life-spring of a manly national character, and of a generous patriotism; a patriotism that rushes to the defence of the country and the vindication of its honor, with the same zeal and alacrity that it guards the hearthstone and the fireside. Wherever Freedom has unfurled her banner, the men who have rallied around to sustain and uphold it, have come from the workshop and the field, where, inured to heat and to cold, and to all the inclemencies of the seasons, they have acquired the hardihood necessary to endure the trials and privations of the camp. An independent yeomanry, scattered over our vast domain, is the best and surest guaranty for the perpetuity of our liberties; for their arms are the citadel of a nation's power, their hearts the bulwarks of liberty. Let the public domain, then, be set apart as the patrimony of labor, by preventing its absorption into large estates by capital, and its consequent cultivation by "tenants and slaves," instead of independent freeholders.

The proposition to change our land policy, so as to accomplish so desirable a result, by securing to the pioneer a home on the public domain at the bare cost of survey and transfer, is often rejected by those who have given but little thought to the subject, as levelling and agrarian. When was there ever an effort made, since the world began, to wrest from power its ill gotten gains, or to restore to man his inalienable rights, but it has been met with the shout of levelling and agrarian? That is the alarm cry of the devotee of the past, with which he ever strives to prevent all reforms or innovations upon established usages. Behind such a bulwark, old abuses intrench themselves, and attempt to maintain their position by hurling against every assailant terms of odium and reproach, made so by the coloring of the adherents of prerogative and power. Until within a very recent period, the chroniclers of the race have been, for the most part, sycophants of the reigning classes; and, being allied with the State, have glossed over its contemporaneous despotism and wrongs, while they have branded the true defenders of the rights of the people and the champions of honorable labor as outlaws of history.

Because the Roman Gracchi proposed to ele-

vate the Roman citizen, by dignifying his labor, and restoring him to the rights of which he had been unjustly deprived by the oligarchy who controlled the State, their name was made synonymous with infamy, and as arch disturbers of all that was good in society, till Niebuhr tore off the veil of two thousand years of obloquy, and vindicated to future times their memories as true defenders of the rights of the people, and advocates of the best interests and glory of their country. Such has been the fate of the world's reformers. Is it not time to learn wisdom from the chronicles of the past, and cease a blind reverence for customs or institutions, because of their gray age? Why should not the American statesman adapt the legislation of the country to the development of its material resources, the promotion of its industrial interests, and thereby dignify its labor, and make strong the prime elements of national power?

Let this vast domain, then, be set apart and consecrated as a patrimony to the sons of toil; close your land office forever against the speculator, and thereby prevent the capital of the country seeking that kind of investment, from absorbing the hard earnings of labor without rendering an equivalent. While the laborer is thus crushed by this system established by the Government, by which so large an amount is abstracted from his earnings for the benefit of the speculator, in addition to all the other disadvantages that ever beset the unequal struggle between the bones and sinews of men and dollars and cents, what wonder is it that misery and want so often sit at his fireside, and penury and sorrow surround his deathbed?

While the pioneer spirit goes forth into the wilderness, snatching new areas from the wild beast, and bequeathing them a legacy to civilized man, let not the Government dampen his ardor and palsy his arm by legislation that places him in the power of soulless capital and grasping speculation; for upon his wild battle field these are the only foes that his own stern heart and right arm cannot vanquish.

A BILL TO SECURE HOMESTEADS TO ACTUAL SETTLERS ON THE PUBLIC DOMAIN.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That any person who is the head of a family, or who has arrived at the age of twenty-one years, and is a citizen of the United States, or who shall have filed his intention to become such, as required by the naturalization laws of the United States, shall, from and after the passage of this act, be entitled to enter, free of cost, one quarter section of unappropriated public lands, upon which said person may have filed a pre-emptor claim, or which may, at the time the application is

made, be subject to pre-emption at one dollar and twenty-five cents or less per acre, or a quantity equal thereto, to be located in a body, in conformity with the legal subdivisions of the public lands, and after the same shall have been surveyed.

Sec. 2. And be it further enacted, That the person applying for the benefit of this act shall, upon application to the register of the land office in which he or she is about to make such entry, make affidavit, before the said register or receiver of said land office, that he or she is the head of a family, or is twenty-one years or more of age, and that such application is made for his or her exclusive use and benefit, and is not specially mentioned in this act, and not either directly or indirectly for the use or benefit of any other person or persons whomsoever; and upon making the affidavit as above required, and filing the affidavit with the register, he or she shall thereupon be permitted to enter the quantity of land already specified: *Provided, however,* That no certificate shall be given or patent issued therefor until the expiration of five years from the date of such entry; and if, at the expiration of such time, or at any time within two years thereafter, the person making such entry, or, if he be dead, his widow, or, in case of her death, his heirs or devisee, or, in case of a widow making such entry, her heirs or devisee, or, in case of her death, shall prove by two credible witnesses that he, she, or they, have continued to reside upon and cultivate said land, and still reside upon the same, and have not alienated the same, or any part thereof, then, in such case, he, she, or they, if at that time a citizen of the United States, shall, on payment of ten dollars, be entitled to a patent, as in other cases provided for by law: *And provided, further,* In case of the death of both father and mother, leaving an infant child or children under twenty-one years of age, the right and the fee shall enure to the benefit of said infant child or children, and the executor, administrator, or guardian, may, at any time within two years after the death of the surviving parent, and in accordance with the laws of the State in which such children for the time being have their domicile, sell said land for the benefit of said infants, but for no other purpose; and the purchaser shall acquire the absolute title by the purchase, and be entitled to a patent from the United States, on payment of the office fees and the sum of money herein specified.

Sec. 3. And be it further enacted, That the register of the land office shall note all such applications on the tract-books and plats of his office, and keep a register of all such entries, and make return thereof to the General Land Office, together with the proof upon which they have been founded.

Sec. 4. And be it further enacted, That all lands acquired under the provisions of this act shall in no event become liable to the satisfaction of any debt or debts contracted prior to the issuing the patent therefor.

Sec. 5. And be it further enacted, That if, at any time after filing the affidavit, as required in the second section of this act, and before the expiration of the five years aforesaid, it shall be proven, after due notice to the settler, to the satisfaction of the register of the land office, that the person having filed such affidavit shall have actually changed his or her residence, or abandoned the said entry for more than six months at any time, then, and in that event, the land so entered shall revert to the Government, and be disposed of as other public lands are now by law, subject to an appeal to the General Land Office.

Sec. 6. And be it further enacted, That no individual shall be permitted to make more than one entry under the provisions of this act; and that the Commissioner of the General Land Office is hereby required to prepare and issue such rules and regulations, consistent with this act, as shall be necessary and proper to carry its provisions into effect; and that the registers and receivers of the several land offices shall be entitled to receive the same compensation for any lands entered under the provisions of this act that they are now entitled to receive when the same quantity of land is entered with money, one-half to be paid by the person making the application, at the time of so doing, and the other half on the issue of the certificate by the person to whom it may be issued: *Provided,* That nothing in this act shall be so construed as to impair or interfere in any manner whatever with existing pre-emption rights.



